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Contd

--10. The formed lining for a vehicle according to claim 1, wherein the film-like hot melt adhesive has a film thickness in a range of 50 to 75 micrometers.--

--11. The formed lining for a vehicle according to claim 1, wherein the base member further comprises a polyamide film.--

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REMARKS

Claims 1-11 are pending herein. By this Amendment, claims 7-11 are added. The attached Appendix includes a marked-up copy of each rewritten claim (37 C.F.R. §1.121(c)(1)(ii)). No new matter is added by this Amendment.

Support for new claim 7 may be found at least at, for example, page 7, lines 17-20 of the originally filed specification. Support for new claim 8 may be found at least at, for example, page 7, lines 13-14 of the originally filed specification. Support for new claim 9 may be found at least at, for example, page 7, lines 13-17 of the originally filed specification. Support for new claim 10 may be found at least at, for example, page 8, lines 8-10 of the originally filed specification. Support for new claim 11 may be found at least at, for example, page 8, lines 4-7 of the originally filed specification.

I. Restriction Requirement

In reply to the Restriction Requirement, Applicants hereby affirm election of Group I, claims 1-3 (drawn to a formed lining for a vehicle). Applicants respectfully traverse the Restriction Requirement.

According to the Restriction Requirement, the invention of Group II, claims 4-6 (drawn to a method for manufacturing a formed lining for a vehicle), and the invention of Group I are related as a process of making and product made. The Patent Office asserted that the inventions are distinct because the product may be made by a materially different process.

It is respectfully submitted that the subject matter of all claims 4-6 of Group II is sufficiently related to the claims of Group I that examination of all claims can be conducted without serious burden upon the Patent Office. In particular, the process recited in the claims of Group II includes all the limitations of claim 1 of Group I. Thus, a complete search for the claimed product should also entail a search for the process of making the product. It is therefore respectfully submitted that the search and examination of the entire application could be made without serious burden. See MPEP §803 in which it is stated that "if the search and examination of the entire application can be made without serious burden, the Examiner must examine it on the merits even though it includes claims to distinct or independent inventions" (emphasis added). It is respectfully submitted that this policy should apply in the present application in order to avoid unnecessary delay and expense to Applicant and duplicative examination by the Patent Office.

Finally, Applicant notes that as the claims of Group II include all of the limitations of claim 1 of Group I, upon allowance of the claims of Group I, the claims of Group II must be rejoined with the application and similarly allowed.

For at least these reasons, withdrawal of the Restriction Requirement is respectfully requested.

II. Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. §102(a)

Claims 1-3 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(a) as allegedly being anticipated by Applicants' own admission regarding the prior art on page 1, lines 16-20 of the specification. The rejection is respectfully traversed.

The present invention claims a formed lining for a vehicle comprising a base member and a top cover member. The base member comprises a film-like hot melt adhesive on a front thereof. The top cover member comprises a web-like hot melt adhesive on a back

thereof. The top cover member is then bonded to the base member and the formed lining has a laminated structure (claim 1). The top cover may further comprise a cushion layer (claim 2).

In the present invention, one of the important features is that a web-like hot melt adhesive is used on a back of the top cover member.

The Patent Office alleges that the admitted art describes a lining of a vehicle made by bonding a top cover member to a multilayer base member by use of a hot melt adhesive film. The Patent Office alleges that when the base member is bonded to the top cover member, the two hot melt adhesive layers are presumably activated by heating and contact each other to bond the two elements together. The Patent Office further alleges that when this bonding occurs and the resultant product is cooled, the two hot melt adhesive layers have merged to form a single fused hot melt adhesive layer. The Patent Office asserts that this resultant single fused hot melt adhesive layer is identical to that of the present invention.

Applicants respectfully disagree with the assertions of the Patent Office. In the present invention, the adhesive layer formed from the bonding of the top cover member and the base member maintains a two-layer construction. As such, the formed vehicle lining of the present invention comprises two bonded hot melt layer instead of one fused hot melt layer. Applicants respectfully submit that the prior art discussed in the specification of the present invention fails to teach or suggest the two layer (i.e., laminate) structure of the present invention.

Further, the prior art does not teach or suggest use of a web-like hot melt adhesive as in the present invention. The web-like hot melt adhesive used for the back of the top cover member of the vehicle lining of the present invention provides for improved adhesion effect compared to a formed vehicle lining using a film-like hot melt adhesive for the back of the

top cover member. When a film-like hot melt adhesive is used, a formed lining for a vehicle including air in the bonded hot melt layer is obtained. Such a formed lining including air in the bonded hot melt layer does not accomplish the object of the present invention whereby the bond between a base member and a top cover member has high adhesive strength and does not experience adhesion failure due to air. See the paragraph bridging pages 7 and 8 of the specification.

Further, Applicants respectfully submit that none of the prior art cited by the Examiner teaches or suggests the use of a web-like hot melt adhesive as claimed in the present invention on the back of the top cover member.

For at least the foregoing reasons, reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection are respectfully requested.

III. Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. §103(a)

Claims 1-3 were rejected under 103(a) as allegedly being unpatentable over Applicants' own admission regarding the prior art on page 1, lines 16-20 of the specification. The rejection is respectfully traversed.

In particular, the Patent Office has alleged that any differences between the present invention and the prior art would have been obvious modifications if not fully disclosed either inherently or expressly by the prior art.

Applicants respectfully submit that the prior art fails to teach or suggest the present invention. In particular, the prior art teaches only the situation wherein the bonded hot melt layers fuse to form only one hot melt layer. The present invention involves melting two distinct hot melt layers, a film-like hot melt adhesive and a web-like hot melt adhesive, which bond together but still comprise two bonded layers. The prior art fails to teach or suggest the improved adhesion effect of the two bonded layers.

Further, Applicants respectfully submit that the prior art cited by the Examiner fails to teach or suggest the use of a web-like hot melt adhesive as claimed in the present invention (claim 1).

For at least the foregoing reasons, reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejections are respectfully requested.

IV. Conclusion

In view of the foregoing amendments and remarks, Applicants submit that this application is in condition for allowance. Favorable reconsideration and prompt allowance of claims 1-11 are earnestly solicited.

Should the Examiner believe that anything further would be desirable in order to place this application in better condition for allowance, the Examiner is invited to contact Applicants' undersigned representative at the telephone number listed below.

Respectfully submitted,



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